DE DICTO AND *DE RE* ATTITUDES TOWARDS PROPERTIES

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I undertake to apply the *de dicto/de re* distinction familiar to philosophers of language from objects to properties. To do this, I come up with a new characterization of the distinction, and apply it to some cases in the literature to show how it deals with them, and how the phenomena are more common and varied than one might think. I discuss how it would apply to color-blind people's understanding of color terms, to show its intuitiveness, and how it would call for the use of Higher Order Logic, and then apply it to outstanding questions in Metaphysics, Moral Psychology, Epistemology, Philosophy of Mind, Moore Studies, Metaphilosophy, Metaethics, and Philosophy of Science, in order to develop new and significant ideas and insights. By doing this, I hope not only to cast light on old problems, and support some common and traditional, and I hope, common sense, views by showing how the distinction has the potential to deal with some familiar objections, but also to provide support for accepting the view that the *de re/de dicto* distinction makes sense when applied to properties, and that we should therefor embrace it and Higher Order Logic, because of their fecundity.

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1.

Consider the color-blind man who believes that fire engines are red. Such a man can believe this, and even know it, but, typically, if not always, there will be something defective about his belief. He won't quite know what it is he believes, because he won't quite know what red is. I want to suggest that there's a parallel between him and the man who is told that Joseph Dzhugashvili was a Georgian and believes it, but knows no more about him than that. The latter's belief is, in the familiar phrase, about Dzhugashvili *de dicto*, but not *de re*; in other words, he believes that Dzhugashvili was a Georgian, but doesn't believe *of* Dzhugashvili that he was a Georgian; in yet other words, he isn't ascribing a property directly to Dzhugashvili, whom he's unable to think about directly and doesn't know, but only believes that, whoever he may have been, he was Georgian. Likewise the former's belief is about the color red *de dicto*, not *de re*; he is not ascribing the property of being red itself, which he has no way to think about, to fire engines, but only believes that, whatever that property may be, fire engines have it. In the latter case it isn't safe to substitute other names for the same man into the belief context, and it doesn't follow from the fact that a man believes that Joseph Dzhugashvili was a Georgian that he must believe that Joseph Stalin was a Georgian. Likewise, in the former case, the fact that the color-blind man believes that fire engines are red, doesn't mean he believes that they are flame-colored.

Philosophers of language have written about the use of subject terms *de dicto* (often characterized as using terms without knowing what they refer to) for the better part of a century at least, but have paid very little attention to the use of predicate terms *de dicto*. This relative neglect is not due to its relative unimportance (we'll see that the topic has very wide-ranging ramifications,) nor, I daresay, to its relative rarity. Doubtless, many people have noticed over the years that lots of other people, many of them students, are only too given to using predicates they don't fully understand, to society's general detriment. In this paper, I shall try to apply what has been learned about the former cases to our understanding of the latter. This will involve some extrapolation from what is explicitly said in the relevant literature, and the drawing of morals from more than one paper at a time. For example, the pragmatic phenomenon of speaker's reference (Kripke, 1977 *fl.*) will be applied to show how one may have something in mind *de re* even under a description that doesn't apply to it. This may be a new moral, but it's also a rather obvious one. Once one admits Donnellan's (1966) case of a man referring to a man drinking sparkling water with the phrase "The man drinking champagne" because he doesn't know what's in the glass, it follows immediately that he can think of him under that description, as is clear from the rest of the paper.

In most of the rest of this section, after mentioning some problems facing my account, I'll argue against such accounts of seeming ignorance of the references of predicates as are in the literature. In Section II, I intend to explore the nature of the *de dicto/de re* distinction and its applications. I'll introduce a new account of the distinction, discuss a number of cases in the literature that the distinction plausibly applies to, and undertake to show how my new account can deal with those cases, and how it might further apply to more such cases involving properties. I hope to show that it has flexibility other accounts don't, but not so as seriously to vitiate its philosophical merits. In Section III, I intend to use the resources I've developed in Section II to address some classic philosophical problems. I'll try to show how applying the distinction to predicates might cast light on many other issues.

Although the scope of my inquiries will be broad, I'd like to remain modest in my claims for them. I think the new account of the distinction is of interest, even if mostly because of its novelty. I think the application of the distinction to predicates is both original, and satisfies clear intuitions in particular cases. I think together they promise solutions to many old philosophical problems. I hope you will find many of these things worthy of notice in themselves. But, even if you aren't impressed with particular phenomena or particular ideas, and want to reject all my claims, I think the facts that so many connections can properly be drawn among them, and that they hang together in so many ways, are worthy of the informed reader's attention, if only so he can know they must all be rejected at once.

The application of the *de re/de dicto* distinction to the case of color-blind people's use of color terms strikes me as highly intuitive, almost obvious. The failure to do so until now is probably due not to any implausibility in the thesis, but to the fact that symbolizing such a thing in logical terms would require that we use Second Order Logic, which is not standardly used, and which many logicians and metaphysicians are likely to resist. Some would

object that Second Order Logic is incomplete, a serious flaw, and others would complain that it commits us to the existence of dubious entities, which are hard to understand, and seem impossible to refer to. These are legitimate misgivings, but I shall not confront them directly. Beyond claiming that Second Order Logic has explanatory value, I shall not argue for it, or attempt to address its shortcomings.

Nor shall I directly confront another problem which I think deserves mention. It is that even Second Order Logic might not be strong enough. Many of my applications will involve the use of properties such as goodness and rationality, which are, in my view, plausibly impredicative, that is, they are properties which have themselves as properties. It seems to me that goodness is good, and that it's rational to be rational. No one has yet discovered a satisfactory logic for impredicative properties; we simply have no rigorous and adequate way to deal with them. Having registered this objection, I shall simply by-pass it for the rest of the paper. The fact that we don't have a rigorous and adequate logic for dealing with other issues does not keep us from using what logic we have to try to understand them. The Peano Axioms are still used to aid our understanding of arithmetic, even though Gödel proved them incomplete, and Tarski's semantics for formal languages has been exploited for insights into natural language semantics (*e.g.*, Davidson, 1967), even though Tarski explicitly doubted its applicability thereto. In like spirit, I trust we can use Second Order Logic to approximate what we're trying to understand, as a way to gain insight into it.

Philosophers who talk about the use of predicates which one doesn't rightly understand in propositional attitude contexts have, up until now, tended to make unsystematic and somewhat *ad hoc* suggestions, when they discussed such cases at all. Sometimes it's been suggested that such usages are "ironical", or "inverted commas" usages (like the ones a few words back,) in which one defers to common usage without endorsing it. That is, certainly, one way in which a word can be *de dicto*, but not the only one. A color-blind man can be certain that common usage of the word 'red' is meaningful, and endorse it, and still not know what it means. On the other hand, he might have no idea of whether the word is commonly used or not (he might suspect it's a neologism,) or, if so, how it is used, and yet use the word in formulating his beliefs. Or he might think he knows all about redness, and use it perfectly seriously, and be wrong. Other cases could probably be added.

Another suggestion is that, in cases where the believer is ignorant of the semantics of a predicate used in expressing his belief, he doesn't really believe the thing he professes to believe at all, since it's nonsense to him, but only believe that the sentence he speaks is true. Different responses to this bring up different important issues, so I shall spend a few paragraphs on it.

Even if there are extreme cases in which your ignorance is so great that this may be the best way to describe the case, one you can be pretty ignorant of what you're saying and still manage to believe it. One's assent to a form of words commits him to the proper meanings of the words in ways which this proposal can't do justice to. Consider Tyler Burge's case of the man who doesn't understand that 'arthritis' refers to inflammatory diseases of the joints and thinks it refers to all inflammatory diseases, and thence acquires the belief that

he has arthritis in his thigh. Although the facts, we may assume, fit the meaning he thinks the word has, he is nonetheless wrong, because the word does not mean what he believes, but what the doctors say. If informed of expert usage, he could be expected to agree. He is committed to the words' proper meanings, even though he doesn't know what they all are. Yet, if the belief he express with the words 'I have arthritis in my thigh' were merely that those words expressed a truth, he *would* be right. He would be using them to express a truth, namely that he had an inflammation in his thigh. You could try to gloss this by saying his belief is actually that the sentence expresses a truth when used according to its standard meaning, but, remember, he doesn't know its standard meaning, and, so, can't speak of it *de re*. He believes its standard meaning is its meaning in his idiolect. His use of 'standard meaning' would have to be *de dicto*, and not directly about the actual standard meaning as such, but just about whatever the standard meaning might be. So this attempt to evade making the distinction between *de re* and *de dicto* uses of predicates can only work if we make a distinction between *de re* and *de dicto* uses of the phrase 'standard meaning'. If this isn't a case of applying the distinction to uses of predicates, it doesn't seem much better.

Another objection to the claim that one can't truly believe a proposition if one doesn't fully know what all the words in the sentence expressing it refer to, is that it would obscure genuine distinctions. There are many different ways of failing fully to understand a sentence, which have different consequences for one's cognition and action. Surely we can distinguish among people who don't understand the sentence 'Grass is green in the summertime' because they don't know what grass is, because they don't know what greenness is, because they don't know what summertime is, because they don't know the first two, because they don't know the last two, because they don't know the first and last, and because they don't know any of them, but, if we can't apply the *de re/de dicto* distinction to predicates, it's hard to see how we can account for these intuitions.

Just to be clear, I'm not trying to account for all questionable uses of predicates with this distinction. I'm well aware that people can understand their words perfectly and still say something wrong. I shall have little to say about these other forms of error, but I want to make clear that I know the limitations of my method, and I hope to continue to be clear about it as I go on.

2.

The theory of *de dicto* attitudes I shall be adopting is a privation theory. *De re* attitudes are the normative ideal, and each *de dicto* attitude is some privation of that normative ideal.

Although normative privation theories are philosophically venerable (they probably go back to Plato), they are more often found in value theory than philosophy of language. St. Augustine's privation theory of evil, in particular, holds that evil is the privation of some good, that is, the absence of some good that should be there. (This view is still widely accepted.) I hope to be able to draw on this long history both to establish the respectability of this general approach, and to show something of its strengths and weaknesses, to get a better idea of how it might apply to matters of language.

The greatest weakness of a privation view of evil is that it's unexplanatory. Traditionally, instances of privative concepts have not been thought to need to have anything in common. They were defined in terms of whatever goodness they were supposed to be privations of, and one privation could lack one aspect of goodness, while another something entirely different. (As the old saying goes, there is no form of the bad, only a series of fallings away from the form of the good.) Attempts to explain them in terms of the concept of goodness also tended not to get far, since goodness is primitive on this view. It isn't something that's supposed to be explained. It's something that's supposed to explain all other things. Plato's struggles with describing the form of the Good are notorious (360 B.C., 505a-518d).

The greatest strength of such a view is closely tied to its greatest weakness; they are two sides of the same coin. That's its versatility. Just as it's very hard to say in advance everything that it will count as good or bad, it's also very hard to prove after that some particular thing can't fit the theory. This is especially true when such a theory is applied to the thoughts and behavior of human beings, who are known to be finite and flawed, perhaps highly so. The history of moral philosophy demonstrates this, and shows how things which may not seem like privations at first glance can plausibly be construed as privations. To get full use of the application of the *de dicto/de re* distinction to predicates, I'm going to have to show how it applies in a wide variety of cases in an unsystematic, or seemingly unsystematic, manner. I'm going to have to show that, if sufficiently confused, one can have *de re* attitudes towards something under the wrong words, or maybe no words, and one's uses of a name can switch from *de re* to *de dicto* in a short space and a very volatile manner. This would allow us to have attitudes towards properties *de re*, even when we didn't *de dicto*, and seemingly incompatible attitudes towards properties at the same time, or nearly. I believe I can show these things by using cases already in the literature that involve particulars, and that a privation theory can best account for them.

Although, as I indicated, it's difficult to get an unanswerable proof of the truth of a privation theory, I think its adoption can be motivated by normative and historical considerations. In Latin and Greek there is no distinctive word for moral badness, the same word applies to all sorts of badness. Thus, to describe Plato and Augustine's view as a privation theory of *evil* is somewhat misleading, even if traditional. To them, every bad thing was a privation, including, presumably, all sorts of normative deficiencies. This would include irrationality, immorality, and, in their metaphysics, unreality. Normativity seems deeply involved in language, both from a pre-philosophical, and from a philosophical, standpoint. It's common to speak of good and bad grammar, good and bad word usage, and good and bad style. Truthfulness is good, and untruthfulness is bad. Some words are considered worse than others. Within philosophy, the view that meaning is normative is associated with Kripke (1982, 22-4). It is influential, even if contested. But normative considerations come up in other ways, clearly, if sometimes only implicitly. Davidson's Principle of Charity (1973, 326) can be considered normative. Grice's Conversational Maxims (1989, 26-27) are best understood as rules we ought to follow. Ordinary Language Philosophers and their opponents sharply disagreed about the nature of language, but each seems to have been quite convinced that there were right and wrong ways to use it. Indeed, that seems to be at the center of their disagreement. The former thought that the right way was the

informal usage of ordinary men, and the latter thought it was the formal usage of logicians. And each side, whatever its official view of value judgments, was out to make philosophy and the world *better*.

Very plausibly, some of the notions of good and bad mentioned in the last paragraph aren't purely linguistic. That's all right. All I'm maintaining is that there are normative considerations involved, at least some of which take distinctive forms when applied to language, and that the relevant violations of the relevant norms can be accommodated in a privation theory of the sort that's often applied to moral evil. I think that's plausible, and I think that's all I need. In fact, the weakness of my thesis may actually increase its fruitfulness. It could allow it to be applied, with some *prima facie* plausibility, to virtually any use of language which appears wrong in some way.

This will also serve to motivate and justify acceptance of the new explanations of known linguistic phenomena in terms of the *de dicto/de re* distinction that I intend to offer soon. Any deficiency in the actual use of language which involves reference is a candidate to be accounted for in terms of said distinction on a privation view of the *de dicto*, because a *de dicto* use is just one which is relevantly deficient. What's more, such looseness in the account will be highly desirable, if not absolutely necessary, when we turn to predicates in Section III. As I said in Section I, many of the most interesting applications pertain to normative properties, such as goodness and rationality. It's almost a truism that it's morally desirable to understand morality, and rationally desirable to understand rationality. Given privation theories of evil and irrationality, the privative status of misuses of the words that apply to them follows almost trivially. The privation view of evil is, I believe, traditional and common; the privation view of irrationality, as far as I know, is neither, though that may just be because few philosophers have thought about the ontological status of irrationality. But, if the privative nature of evil can be used to explain certain puzzles regarding its cognition, and parallel problems involving unreason could be addressed in the same way, that by itself would provide a reason to adopt a privation theory of irrationality.

There is one possible objection to the line of reasoning in the previous paragraph that needs addressing. One may think that, if evil and unreason are mere privations, that would present insuperable obstacles to having even *de dicto* attitudes towards them. How could you have attitudes towards something that isn't really there? There are doubtless deep and difficult problems here, but it's a historical fact that it is possible to have attitudes towards things that don't, and even can't, exist as long as one believes they do exist. Many mathematicians through the centuries wanted a method for squaring the circle with compass and straight edge, for example, before it was finally proven that there could be no such method.

All this may seem just too easy to some, but I ask the reader to wait and see what work this way of approaching thought and language can do before rejecting it out of hand. Now I'd like to examine some cases in the literature in light of the preceding remarks.

Consider the following case, which I adapt from one given by Keith Donnellan (1970, 349-51). Suppose a philosophy student has long wanted to meet the famous philosopher H.P. Aston-Martin. At a party, he is introduced to someone under that name. Unbeknownst to him, a trick is being played on him, and the man is actually someone obscure named V.W. Bugg. Under a misapprehension as to their identity, he refers to them variously in his later accounts. "I met H.P. Aston-Martin the other day" (*de dicto*, Aston-Martin, *de re*, Bugg.) "I've always wanted to meet Aston-Martin" (*de re*, Aston-Martin.) "Aston-Martin is a good dancer" (*de dicto*, Aston-Martin, *de re*, Bugg.) "Aston-Martin rejected some of his earlier positions" (first reference, *de dicto*, Aston Martin, *de re*, Bugg; second reference, *de re*, Aston Martin.) "Aston-Martin seemed full of hope for the future" (*de dicto*, Aston-Martin, *de re*, Bugg.) "I believe Aston-Martin's best work is ahead of him" (both references, *de re*, Aston-Martin.) It is entirely possible (and plausible) that he could say all these sentences in the space of a single, short, conversation, referring indifferently to one and then the other, without ever realizing it. There are a few features of note in this example. First, the student succeeds in referring *de re* to Bugg, even though he doesn't know his name, and, in a sense, doesn't know who he is. Likewise, we may suppose that someone sufficiently confused about the nature of goodness or rationality might nonetheless be able to think about it and desire it *de re*, even if he didn't know that was what he was doing, by coming across an instance of it, and mistaking it for something else. Second, the fact that he uses Aston-Martin's name, and knows enough about him to speak of him *de re* in normal circumstances, doesn't guarantee that he's speaking of him *de re* under these conditions of misidentification. The sudden acquisition and great salience of new beliefs in this case would serve to make many beliefs presumably about him *de dicto*, even though, before he acquired these new beliefs, and, in many circumstances after he did, his old beliefs enabled him unproblematically to think about him *de re*. Likewise, someone who confused evil or irrationality with something better, though still able to hold some attitudes towards it *de re*, might be able to desire it *de dicto* without thereby desiring it *de re*, and that by desiring the thing he confused it with *de re*. And, he might never realize he was not thinking only of irrationality or evil. Also, I'd like to point out, the case is not much different if we suppose that the student believes that V.W. Bugg does not exist (perhaps he finds the name suspicious.) He'd still be thinking about him *de re*. Likewise, someone so confused as to believe that some real property (or even all properties) didn't exist could still have attitudes towards it (or them) *de re* if he had interacted with it (or them) in the right way.

I'd like to point out another way one can be confused about properties that's the reverse of the last one, by thinking that one property is really more than one. Again, the parallel problem for particulars is written about in the literature. It's sometimes called Frege's Puzzle,[1] because Gottlob Frege (85) first posed it. It's classically posed as a problem involving the Evening Star (called Hesperus) and the Morning Star (called Phosphorus.) It's trivial to be told 'Hesperus is Hesperus', but it's not trivial to be told 'Hesperus is Phosphorus', even though the two names name the same thing. The latter was an important discovery of ancient astronomy. If one does not believe that Hesperus is Phosphorus, it must be because he, however temporarily, is ignorant about what at least one of the names refers to. This

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[1] Van Roojen (ff.) thought of applying the lessons of Frege's Puzzle to Moral Psychology in his paper of 2010. His use was limited to arguing that the properties of goodness and being practically rational could be identical without its being obvious, and he didn't discuss the *de re/de dicto* distinction. My own views were arrived at independently.

sort of ignorance, again, can appear and disappear very quickly and very unpredictably. In this case, as in cases of ordinary misinformation, the addition of a new belief to one's store, can cause him to have *de dicto* attitudes, without necessarily rendering *de re* cognition impossible for him. An ancient Babylonian could believe, perfectly rationally by his lights, "Hesperus appears in the evening but Phosphorus doesn't, and Phosphorus appears in the morning but Hesperus doesn't." In one sentence, the first 'Hesperus' is *de re*, the first 'Phosphorus' *de dicto*, the second 'Phosphorus' *de re*, and the second 'Hesperus' *de dicto*, and all without the believer's having any clue about it. (I consider the first 'Phosphorus' and the second 'Hesperus' to be *de dicto* because the clauses they are in are both false and rational. If you reach a false belief about something perfectly rationally, it's because you lack knowledge you should have, and that's a privation.) It seems reasonable that, if one doesn't believe rationality or morality are of a single kind, or one draws an unwarranted distinction between the properties of one's common sense beliefs and their philosophical namesakes, he could go from understanding what they are to not and back again very quickly, without recognizing it. Examples might be a Marxist who distinguishes between Bourgeois and Revolutionary Morality, and, in virtue of that distinction, feels justified in ignoring most moral obligations, Averroes, who distinguished between Religious Truth and Philosophical Truth, and held they could disagree, or Berkeley, who held there was a distinction between the pre-philosophical notion of a physical object and his philosophical notion, and that the former should be rejected. It's not too hard to see how such false distinctions could arise, either. In each case, the thinker finds something he likes in the property and something he doesn't, and, rather than accept it as a package deal, comes to believe that his difference in attitudes corresponds to a difference in their objects. If you accept, as many do, that there's a connection between liking something and thinking that it's good in some way, and disliking something, and thinking it's bad in some way, then false distinctions regarding normative properties becomes even more understandable.

So far I've just discussed confusions based on mistaken identities. It's not entirely clear whether one can go from understanding to not understanding a term so easily because of other false beliefs. It should be noted however that, while considerations based on Russell's Paradox show that not all descriptions define properties, it still seems likely that many of them do, so cases of falsely describing properties should often collapse into cases of false identification of properties. This suggests that highly volatile states of confusion about properties might occur more readily than similar states about objects.

Finally, I want to disclaim any intention of completeness in my brief account of ways our attitudes may be *de dicto*. I'm sure there's more that can be said. But this should give enough of an idea of their variety and volatility to serve our purpose.

3.

The phenomenon of not grasping the reference of a predicate properly seems very real to me, and, I hope, to you, and my explanation of it, in terms of the *de dicto/de re* distinction, seems very intuitive to me, and, I hope, to you, but it would scarcely be worth making, if it didn't have applications to other areas of philosophy. As it is, it has applications to Logic, Metaphysics, Moral Psychology, Philosophy of Mind, Epistemology, Moore Stud-

ies, Metaphilosophy, Metaethics, and Philosophy of Science, some of them potentially very important. I'll discuss most of them, some better and some worse, in this section.

First, the intuitiveness and fecundity of such a distinction is additional reason for taking seriously the claims of Second Order Logic, as I suggested before. The distinction between the logical form of *de re* attitude reports and the logical form of *de dicto* attitude reports is partly a matter of whether we quantify over the right variables (*de re*) or not (*de dicto*). So, if we can think *de re* about the referents of predicates, we must be able to quantify over variables in predicate place, for which we need Second (or Higher) Order Logic. Since quantification over something commits us to its existence, the acceptance of this distinction commits us to the existence of things that predicates refer to, whatever they are. Many philosophers think they are sets, but the distinction between *de re* and *de dicto* attitudes to them in propositional attitude reports militates for a different view of Second Order Logic, as quantifying over finely grained properties instead. There are two reasons for saying this. First, it seems that, as a matter of simple logical form, one could distinguish between *de re* attitudes towards the things that have a property, and *de re* attitudes towards the property. The former would involve giving the object quantifiers the widest scope, the propositional attitude operator intermediate scope, and the property quantifier the narrowest scope. The latter would involve giving the property quantifier the widest scope, the propositional attitude operator intermediate scope, and the object quantifier the narrowest scope. This distinction in logical form should mark a distinction in how people can think, or why do we have propositional attitude operators? Second, it seems intuitive that someone could have a perfectly adequate way of finding objects that satisfied a given predicate, and still not know what the predicate referred to. Consider the color-blind man with a spectrometer which clicked whenever it was pointed at something red. He could be able to identify red things as well as was needed, without knowing what red was, so there must be something more to redness than the set of things that have it. Or consider a foreigner who has memorized the names and brief biographies of all the Vice-Presidents of the United States, but doesn't know anything about the powers, privileges, and responsibilities of the office. He would seem to have a grasp on the extension of 'is Vice-President of the United States,' but not on the property of being Vice-President of the United States.

The example of the color-blind man with the spectrometer might suggest Jackson's case of Mary (1982, 130) the brilliant color scientist with black-and-white vision, who knew everything about the color red except what it looked like. I believe the former could be elaborated into the latter. If it were, Mary's ignorance of what red looked like would make some of her knowledge of it *de dicto*. On my view, that is perfectly compatible with the rest of it being *de re*. (In fact, I believe some of it would be.) Since Jackson wants to argue that Mary doesn't just occasionally lack knowledge of red, or of some physical fact about redness, but specifically that she lacks knowledge of the mentalistic fact of how red looks, my approach would tend to be at odds with his, but it would be difficult for me to say anything more definite than that without further investigation.

I have claimed that we quantify over properties which leads to the question of what they are. I don't think the logic decides among the different views, and I'm not going to press a particular view where the logic doesn't. We quantify over them, so we're committed

to their existence by Quine's famous criterion of ontological commitment (1948, 31-32). I think we're committed to some of them, at least, being irreducible to objects or sets. They must somehow be accessible to the mind. Apart from these strictures, you're free to choose among all the opinions that have been mooted over the millennia. They might be Platonic ante rem universals, which exist independently of the objects that instantiate them, and would exist even if nothing instantiated them. They might be Aristotelian in rebus universals that exist only in the things that instantiate them, and only insofar as they are instantiated. They might be ideas in the mind of God. They might be equivalence classes of tropes, to mention a contemporary view. I'm sure a vigorous debate over their nature and status and accessibility could take place, after all, it has for thousands of years, but I intend simply to sit it out. And, if you find the idea of properties, or our having them in mind, too hard to swallow, I shall not try to counter your objections directly. I am not trying to present conclusive proofs of the views I promote in this paper; I have the more modest ambition of merely proposing some new considerations in their favor, and dealing with a few of the historical objections to them.

The distinction between *de dicto* and *de re* attitudes towards properties might be used to help clear up some problems for common views in Moral Psychology. It is commonly and traditionally held that all desire is for the good, that is, we only desire things insofar as they seem, or are, good, in whatever way. Although it's not my intention to explicate this view more than is necessary, so as not to have to decide between competing schemes of refinement, I think it is necessary to make some things clear, in order to avoid seeming to endorse some particular over refinement. Though we may bring considerable philosophical baggage to our understanding of this thesis, it would clearly be wrong to pass all this baggage on to the people whose minds we hope to describe. To take a simple example, we certainly would not want to have to ascribe any sophisticated and contentious philosophical views about the nature of the good to everyone who prefers good pizza to bad pizza. We should ascribe the minimum philosophical commitments consistent with our thesis to such a man, which I take to be that he's aware (if only implicitly) of the goodness of the pizza, in some way to be made clear later, and that this awareness plays the proper motivational role in his desiring the good pizza, also in some way to be made clear later. (By way of analogy, remember the case of the man thinking *de re* about V.W. Bugg, even though he has no *de dicto* knowledge of him.) I do not want to claim that he really only desires the property of goodness (it's hard to see what this could even mean,) or that he desires the pizza only as a means to acquire its goodness. But the fact that it's good must play an explanatory role in the account of his motivation.

At any rate, this view of motivation runs into trouble in that there seem to be actual cases of people desiring things which they think are not good, or not desiring things which they think are good. One class of such cases is cases of weakness of the will. One can, for example, be aware that sticking to one's diet is necessary to avoid diabetes, and that avoiding diabetes is better than eating what one wants, and still opt for the second slice of chocolate cake, because it just looks so luscious in the moment. In this case, even though he's aware, in whatever sense, that not eating is better, he eats, which is both possible and problematic. It can be explained by supposing that such a man, perhaps temporarily, does not fully grasp what it is for one thing to be better than another as he judges that sticking to his diet would

be better, and his attitude towards its betterness is *de dicto*, exactly when and how it would count. The last clause is important. It is not inconsistent with my view that the man might have *de re* attitudes towards the betterness of sticking to his diet at approximately the same time. Just as the Babylonian I mentioned in the last section can think about Hesperus *de re* at one spot in a sentence, but can only think of it *de dicto* in another, so, I believe, the prospective diabetic can be thinking of goodness *de dicto* in ways related to motivation, but *de re* in ways that lead to remorse. Thus, we can not only account for the phenomenon of giving into temptation, but the experience of hating oneself while doing so. I think some plausibility can be given to this account when we remember that the intensity of some mental states can cause other of our mental states to become defective. Thus, just as the awareness of how one's head is throbbing in the morning can impair one's full appreciation of how appealing the tenth margarita appeared the night before, and is likely to appear again, so the present lusciousness of the chocolate cake can lead to defects in one's grasp of its future bad effects. The solution in either case is just to cognize better, to get oneself to the point where one grasps all the relevant factors fully in the same judgment.

The other class of putative counterexamples to the claim that people desire goodness and don't desire evil has to do with perversity, that is, seeking what's bad because it's bad. To explain, there are people, Satanists and the like, who will explicitly and deliberately assert that they want to be evil and don't want to be good, and, when given the option, actually seem to choose doing the wrong thing over doing the right. The general outline of a response should be clear to you by now, it is to say that they love evil and hate good only because and insofar as their attitudes towards them are *de dicto*. If they fully and continuously grasped the nature of the properties they were thinking about, if their attitudes were fully and consistently *de re*, they'd always love good and hate evil. Note that, as I indicated with regard to redness, not knowing what these properties are is compatible with being able to identify their instances in many cases. Note also, that there's nothing in this account that would preclude Satanists from desiring good and hating evil *de re*, they'd just have to do it in unobvious ways. Finally, to those who find it incredible that cognition could go so horribly wrong, I say, first, wrongness is exactly what my theory predicts, and, second, it's hard to see how Satanists could not be horribly wrong in some way.

Another sort of perversity, with regard to cognition, can perhaps be dealt with in a similar manner. Analytic Philosophers seem inclined to regard all men as rational, in a sufficiently loose sense, even if they don't explicitly say so, and the common view among Epistemologists is that beliefs tend to be better to the extent they are rational. Yet there seem to be people who explicitly and deliberately deny their own rationality, and claim beliefs are only commendable when adopted contrary to reason. Kierkegaard, for one, claimed, as I understand, that belief was only meritorious, if, and insofar as, it was irrational, and salvation was a matter of what he called a leap of faith, in which one adhered to God, not merely in spite of, but because of, a lack of reason to do so. I suggest this is only because he didn't fully and consistently understand rationality, or irrationality. If his attitudes towards them had been continuously *de re*, rather than occasionally *de dicto*, he would never have been able to maintain them. Once again, this doesn't mean that he wouldn't have been able to identify rational and irrational beliefs in many cases. This claim (that irrationalists do not cognize their position properly) is probably somewhat more intuitive than the previous

claim about immoralists, because it is more intuitive that rationality is necessary to proper cognition.

In my accounts of the above kinds of cases of the flouting of morals and reason, I maintain that one can only flout them if one doesn't, at the moment of flouting, grasp them in the right way, that is, if one's attitudes towards them are relevantly *de dicto*. Furthermore, to make my accounts work, I have to suppose that, in such cases, one sees, however mistakenly, something right in flouting them. That is, one must think that there's something good in badness, or something rational in irrationality, where one's attitudes towards that goodness or rationality is *de re*, though one's attitudes towards the badness or irrationality that supposedly instantiates them is *de dicto*. This is a complicated picture, but I think the complications are necessary, at least if we want to continue to adhere to something like the old views about what's desirable and what isn't. If we say that Satanists desire evil *de re*, because they think there's something good about it, then we say that it's possible to desire evil both *de re* and *de dicto*, since Satanists do both, but, then, it seems that there's no way in which it's impossible to desire evil. This is a possible position, but it's not the one we started with, and it's not the consensus one. It might also be urged against it that it's very like, if not identical to, the view that there's something good about evil, and this sounds incoherent, if one has the common understanding of good and evil. It's an egregiously wrong view, and, on my account, egregiously wrong attitudes are to be accounted for by supposing a *de dicto* reading of the attitudes. On the opposite extreme, although it is theoretically possible for someone to use the word 'evil' to mean 'good', I don't think it's either necessary or plausible to hold that the Satanists are really thinking of goodness *de re* when they speak of evil, and just have very odd views about it. On the view I take myself to be defending, people can aim for the good without having any particular commitment to any strong metaphysical notion of it, by aiming for particular things that had some good property. (For example, someone can want to be a good date without ever thinking of the metaphysics of goodness at all.) So, Satanists don't have to mean good by "evil" to be aiming for some good while pursuing what they call "evil". Also, if this last proposal is true, the beliefs about the nature of goodness Satanists have would have to be so odd, that, again, it's hard to see how they would all really be *de re* beliefs about goodness. To fit the data, Satanists would have to believe of most actually evil deeds that they were good. I have written of how one might have a *de re* attitude towards an extension, while having a *de dicto* attitude towards the associated property, but this case, in which one had a *de re* attitude towards a property, while consistently getting its extension exactly wrong, seems more dubious. If someone said he knew what redness was, but consistently applied the word 'red' to all and only things that weren't red, he would not be believed.

Another difficult class of cases is that of self-deception. There is much dispute about the proper characterization of this phenomenon, and even its existence, but, if you accept a naïve view of the notion, you are presented with two problems. First, if you deceive someone that *p*, you must believe that '*p*' is false, and, if you are deceived that *p*, you must believe that '*p*' is true, according to the meaning of the word 'deceive'. So, if you deceive yourself that *p*, you must believe that '*p*' is true and believe that '*p*' is false, which are contradictories. (This is called the 'static paradox'.) Second, deception is an intentional act, perpetrated by someone who knows the intention (the deceiver,) on someone who doesn't

(the deceived.) If one person is both deceiver and deceived, he would seem to have to be both knowing and unknowing about his intent to deceive himself, and this is impossible. (This is called the 'dynamic paradox'. I get the foregoing from DeWeese-Boyd.) Our basic strategy should not be hard to foresee, but the details of the cases invite some refinements. You can believe that 'p' is true and believe that 'p' is false at the same time if at least one of 'true' and 'false' is *de dicto* at that time. The dynamic paradox is harder to be definite about, if only because we're confronted with an embarrassment of riches. Consider, first, that knowledge of the intent to deceive involves nested propositional attitude operators, and second, that deception is supposed to take place over time. The first consideration allows for multiple scope ambiguities beyond those we commonly call *de dicto* and *de re*, and, since these attitudes are supposed to be ones which the deceiver and the deceived have towards each other, and, those are the same person, our operators and the scope ambiguities they allow could iterate arbitrarily many times, making for a dizzying variety of ways one can misunderstand the content and nature of one's own thoughts. The second allows for the possibility that attitudes may go from *de re* to *de dicto* or vice versa as part of the process of self-deception. This multitude of avenues for confusion is too large for us to consider in a paper mostly dealing with other topics, but the capacity for ever more intricate accounts it demonstrates suggests that it's likely that some can be found that will satisfy all important desiderata.

To continue the discussion, the distinction between *de dicto* and *de re* attitudes towards properties may be useful in understanding how philosophers can maintain positions that are clearly contrary to common sense. It was perhaps first pointed out by G.E. Moore that many philosophers hold to positions that they must know are wrong. Zeno of Elea, for instance, believed that motion was impossible, yet he moved about Southern Italy from place to place quite competently, arguing in each place that motion was impossible. If he truly hadn't known how to move, and thereby known it was possible, he wouldn't have been able to get out of bed in the morning. The shape of an answer should be familiar by now: on those occasions when he planned and executed his own motions, his attitudes towards its impossibility were *de dicto*.

As for how these people might have gotten so confused, knowing the psychology of people whom one has never met, or hypothetical people, always presents challenges, but I think guesses can be made that are sufficiently plausible as to give some support to our explanations. The Satanist might have heard as a child that sensual pleasure was evil, and abstention from it good, and, having strong sensual appetites and a low tolerance for frustration, decided that those were identity statements, and, so, he should be evil. Kierkegaard might have, and, according to some people, did, take Hegelianism to be the paradigm of rationality, and, finding it lacked appreciation for the tragic dimensions of life, and read an implausible purposiveness into every minute workaday detail, rejected what he took to be rationality for what he took to be its opposite. The self-deceiver might have developed his cognitive failings because he liked the immediate results. Zeno might have decided that motion was impossible on the authority of his teacher Parmenides, but failed to draw the obvious conclusion about his own particular motions, out of an excess of reverence for that same teacher. Instead of concluding that something was wrong with Parmenides' arguments, even if he couldn't say what, he concluded something was wrong with his

daily thoughts, even if he couldn't say what. None of these explanations are particularly far-fetched.

Finally, there are arguments against Moral and Scientific Realism (and perhaps other kinds of realism) that may be affected by this distinction. It is sometimes said, for example, that the different views of right and wrong are so various, and have so little in common, that they can't determine the same properties, and we have no reason to regard the properties we refer to as being any more truly moral than any of the others. Likewise, it's claimed that when one scientific theory is supplanted by another, the beliefs about their theoretical objects are typically so different that the latter can't be viewed as talking about the same things as the former, and the former's theoretical objects must be viewed as non-existent. Since it seems reasonable that there will someday be new scientific theories supplanting the ones we have now, it seems reasonable to doubt the reality of our currently employed theoretical objects. It should be clear by now that conflating two properties that are distinguished later is compatible with referring to both at different times, and falsely distinguishing two properties that are rightly identical needn't keep one from referring to it. And if different people conflate the same property with different properties, they can seem to disagree greatly, without really disagreeing much about the same thing. For example, if one man conflates rightness with maximizing happiness and another conflates it with being decreed by God in the Bible (assume for the sake of the example that these are all distinct properties) they can say very different things about it *de dicto*, even while largely agreeing about it *de re*, and the real state of affairs might not be at all obvious to them or any observer. As for scientific theory, the presence of some false details in one's understanding of a theoretical concept doesn't keep the relevant predicate from having it as its semantic referent, and, even in cases in which the concept is so confused that it seems impossible for a term to have a semantic referent, as in the case of Newtonian mass, which seems to be a conflation of rest mass and relativistic mass, that doesn't mean that, as used on a specific occasion, it doesn't have a particular speaker's referent (Kripke 1977, *fl.*). (Words without semantic referents can still have speaker's referents. Consider the expression 'whatsitsname'.) One can speak and think of real things *de re*, even without knowing quite what or how. Disagreement may undermine realist arguments based on consensus, and may motivate skepticism, but it is, at most, only very weak evidence that there isn't a matter of fact people disagree about.

The answers I give or suggest to the above puzzles are not always perfectly respectful to the terms in which they are posed; with regard to many of them, they are revisionist about the views I seek to defend. It is part and parcel of my views that it is possible to be averse to good, and desire evil, and to be averse to reason, and to desire unreason, if only in a sense. *De dicto* attitudes are attitudes, and one is committed to the meanings of the sentences he endorses. That much of a concession to the immoralist and the irrationalist seems inevitable, however, given the data. Explanations of all these things in terms of normative privations, respect the data, while preserving important normative intuitions. As for how we can detect and remedy such privations, while perfection is certainly unattainable, we may hope, nonetheless, that, as we improve our cognitions as we ought to, the worst of them can be expunged over time.

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